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Indiana Department of Homeland Security Implements GIS-Based Disaster Response System

Geospatial software facilitates greater communication and collaboration.

Redlands, CA (PRWEB) October 29, 2008 -- The Indiana Department of Homeland Security (IDHS) recently embarked on an ambitious campaign that provides a communication network built using ESRI geographic information system (GIS) software. The system takes advantage of a Web portal for linking local resources with state and federal stakeholders in the event of a large-scale emergency. This two-way stream of information flow is vital to disaster response.

"We wanted to leverage resources already in place with other state agencies and in the universities across the state," says Roger Koelpin, GIS/critical infrastructure planner, Indiana Department of Homeland Security. "We are able to work with those partners as resources for our internal disaster recovery strategy and continuity of operations planning. Ultimately, we hope to turn this into a viable process for bottom-up reporting of data to meet federal data calls and to keep our federal partners informed as part of our routine, authoritative, common operating picture."

IDHS selected ESRI for its GIS software and services. ESRI Professional Services staff worked with IDHS staff to incorporate ESRI software, including ArcView, ArcEditor, and ArcInfo, into its disaster response system. The system's technology framework involves ESRI business partner ESi and its WebEOC Web-enabled crisis management system. In addition, FME from Safe Software, Inc, was selected to help extract data from stakeholders' Web feature services and transform the data to the U.S. Department of Homeland Security data model.

The enterprise disaster response system provides several functions. First, it is used for mitigation, with state agencies identifying high-risk populations, infrastructure, natural resources, and other assets. Second, it provides instant-response capabilities. When a disaster strikes, real-time situational awareness occurs. Commanders make quick decisions on where to send law enforcement, fire personnel, emergency medical services staff, and other responders. They can instantly see available resources, prioritize activities, and monitor events in real time as they unfold. This capability also helps with long-term recovery.

A major component of the system comes from Indiana university partners who are already using GIS and related technologies to publish IndianaMap: a single, statewide geospatial resource for Indiana that includes a wide variety of information in a format that is accessible to both expert GIS users and the general public.

IDHS is currently working with county stakeholders to more fully integrate their GIS efforts with its own. Presently, 23 counties offer data in support of the IDHS disaster response system. Roughly one-third of Indiana's 92 counties host their own GIS software and databases. Another third of the counties have vendors hosting their data in proprietary 911 call-center applications. Some of these counties are working with their vendors so that they may help maintain the IDHS common operating picture. Some of the counties in the remaining third are using grants to bolster GIS operations, either with vendor support or on their own.

IDHS is also working to extend the system with more applications and data than are currently available.

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Aerial-Photo Maps Depict the Severity of Indiana's Summer Floods

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Contact Information:
U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S.
Geological Survey
Office of Communication
119 National Center
Reston, VA 20192

Scott Morlock [1]
Phone: 317-716-8412

The severity and extent of the June 2008 floods in Indiana can be seen in a series of aerial-photographs that are computer-enhanced to show the inundation from floodwaters.

These flood-peak inundation maps are intended to show the approximate depths and extents of floods using aerial photography as a base map. The maps show areas flooded by water up to 23 feet deep along 17 central and southern Indiana waterways.

They are part of a study by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and its cooperators to document the conditions leading to the flooding, the magnitude and severity of the flooding, and impacts and damages from the flooding for affected communities.

The flooding caused three fatalities and five injuries, more than 8,400 evacuations and water rescues, damage to more than 5,600 residences, and more than 650 roads, 60 bridges, and 100 dams and levees. Total damage costs resulting from the June flooding are expected to be the highest of any disaster in the history of Indiana.

"The severe flooding was the result of nearly continuous moderate to heavy rain that fell for 12 to 16 hours on June 6-7 produced rainfall totals of more than 10 inches in some areas," said hydrologist Scott Morlock of the USGS Indiana Water Science Center in Indianapolis. "These rains fell on ground
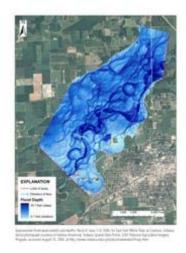
already soaked by a wetter-than-normal spring and resulted in new streamflow peaks of record at 7 of 19 USGS streamgages in the study area."

Estimated recurrence intervals of the floods were greater than 100 years at 5 streamgages in the study area, 50-100 years at 2 streamgages, 25-50 years at 4 streamgages, and 10-25 years at 4 streamgages.

The USGS completed the study in cooperation with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR). The National Weather Service (NWS) and the Indiana State Climate Office provided meteorological data for the report. Flood damage information was furnished by FEMA, NWS, IDNR, the Indiana Department of Homeland Security, and the Indiana Office of Disaster Recovery.

The study has been released as *Flood of June 7-9, 2008, in Central and Southern Indiana*, USGS Open-File Report 2008-1322.

USGS Water Science Centers are located in each state. They can provide more detailed information on stream conditions and on the USGS response to local events.

Approximate flood-peak extents and depths, flood of June 7–9, 2008, for East Fork White River at Seymour, Indiana. Aerial photograph courtesy of Indiana University, Indiana Spatial Data Portal, 2007 National Agriculture

Approximate flood-peak extents and depths, flood of June 7–9, 2008, for Haw Creek at Columbus, Indiana. Aerial photograph courtesy of Indiana University, Indiana Spatial Data Portal, 2007 National Agriculture

Imagery Program, accessed August 15, 2008, at http://www.indiana.edu/~gisdata/statewide/07naip.html

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Weather to blame for toll road closure

Updated: Oct 28, 2008 01:26 PM EDT

Photo courtesy Indiana State Police

Photo courtesy Indiana State Police

BRISTOL, Ind. (AP) -- Three crashes kept the Indiana Toll Road closed for several hours near the northern Indiana city of Bristol as slick roads caused numerous traffic problems in the area.

Toll Road officials say at least three people were injured in the crashes that began about 4:30 a.m. Tuesday, about 20 miles east of South Bend. The highway was reopened in late morning.

Photo courtesy Indiana State Police

Two people were hurt in the first crash when a pickup truck rolled over.

Another crash occurred about a mile away as traffic was stopped for a medical helicopter.

State Trooper Todd LaBonne says a tanker truck was involved in a crash when traffic was stopped for the helicopter to evacuate a victim in the earlier accident. One person was seriously injured.

A state trooper's vehicle also struck a Toll Road maintenance truck. No one was injured.

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